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ABSTRACT

Research on the relationship of communication to national development is at a standstill because theorists have assumed that effective communication will modernize the attitudes of individuals in underdeveloped nations and will eventually result in changing the political, social, and economic structure of their country. Unfortunately, change is unlikely to occur in backward countries since the citizens are bound by restrictive structures which are controlled by self-serving elite groups. Future research in this area should be directed at how organizations, not individuals, use communication (through mass media, pressure groups, community groups, etc.) to control the direction of change. Communications specialists must research means of altering the routine habit or organizations to only seek information which supports the status quo. (EE)

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NEW DIRECTIONS FOR RESEARCH IN COMMUNICATIONS AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: FROM THE STUDY OF INDIVIDUALS TO THE STUDY OF FORMAL ORGANIZATIONS

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"New Directions for Research in Communication and International Development" is an intriguing and challenging subject for discussion--intriguing because it seems to me that research in this area is at a theoretical standstill, challenging because the puzzle of what to do next must be solved if we as researchers are to be able to give advice on how to use communication to stimulate economic and social development.

Why do I think research on communication and development is at a standstill? Perhaps if I list some areas of research which are no longer needed I can make myself clear. We no longer need research on the relationship of mass media development to national development, the diffusion of innovations, freedom of the press in developing countries, empathy, modern values, modernizing attitudes, cultural change and restrictions, literacy, achievement motivation, rising expectations, want/get ratios, the two-step flow, opinion leaders, traditional and transitional individuals, numbers of theater seats and radios, etc., etc., etc.

At this point, I realize I have butchered a number of sacred cows and have probably alienated the majority of members of this panel (alienation, by the way, is another area where no further research is needed). The areas of research which I have excluded include the majority of the studies which have been done to date on the relationship of communication to national development. But if we as researchers

ask ourselves a simple question, I think my initial point can be made: What would we tell a professional communicator or government official in Colombia or India, or Afghanistan to do if he wants to improve communications in his country?

In the first chapter of their book, The Political Economy of Change, Ilchman and Uphoff make a similar point about political science theory as it applies to developing countries. They ask what a political scientist could have told Colonel Gowon when he became president of Nigeria in 1966:[1]

> Colonel Gowon would have found small consolation in the assurance that advancing differentiation would probably usher in a new Nigeria eventually marked by achievement, universalistic and affectively neutral norms, and functionally specific institutions. Nor would it have helped him to be told that "transitional" periods are difficult and unavoidable. What he needed was assistance in shaping productive, constructive policies of the sort normally employed by statesmen.

Research on the relationship of communications and development is at a standstill because theorists have assumed for too long that messages can be given to traditional individuals that will change those individuals to make them more modern. These researchers assume further that modern individuals can change the political, social, or economic system to make it more modern also.

Unfortunately, however, individuals in nearly every underdeveloped country are bound in by restrictive system structures which they as individuals are powerless to change. Even if communication could endow them with more modern attitudes,

the structure would not allow them to change their behavior or more importantly to change the system.

Change in system structure rather than individual change, then, is the essence of national development. And it is structural change that communication directed at individuals is almost powerless to effect. What, then, is the needed new direction for research? Obviously, it should concern how communication can bring about structural change.. And since individuals alone seldom change a structure, the unit of analysis for this research should be the organization--including formal communication organizations, the mass media, pressure groups, and communities.

Two Competing Paradigms

In the early years of research on the relationship between communication and development, a single paradigm tended to dominate the field. I need only mention the names of researchers such as Lerner, Rogers, Pye, and Schramm to bring the paradigm to mind.

That paradigm, simply stated, held that communication causes change (development, modernization, etc.). Researchers applying this paradigm have spent years correlating mass media exposure and other individual communication behaviors with various indices of individual modernization and national development. Most of the findings have been purely descriptive, and many--e.g., Lerner's--basically tautological. For example, it helps little to learn that a lower order concept (media

development) correlates highly with a higher order concept (national development) which subsumes the lower order concept.

Importantly, little real theory has evolved--theory being distinguished from what Brown calls an empirical generalization.[2] A theory exists, according to Brown, when the question of "why" an observed phenomenon occurs can be answered in terms of increasingly more abstract concepts which apply to many situations. It is because of the absence of theory, I believe, that researchers have a difficult time turning their descriptive findings into prescriptive advice for professional communicators.

In contrast to the predominant communications paradigm, however, it is possible to interpret most of the existing literature on communications and development in precisely the opposite fashion. Communication does not cause change. Change creates the need for communication. This simple reversal of the cause-effect relationship of communication and development has been the basis of a new paradigm developed by the author and others. Essentially this paradigm holds that structural change must come first and that communication then enlarges and supports the consequences of that change by making more and more individuals aware of new opportunities.

The results of several studies have supported this hypothesized relationship between communication and development. During two years of research in Colombia, I conducted two studies relating communication behavior to decision situations

of large landowners (latifundistas) and then of peasants (minifundistas). In both studies I used a set of decision concepts to predict information seeking.[3] The concepts are based on two dimensions--the openness of the individual and the openness of the structure:

Individual \ Structure	Open	Closed
Open	Problem Solving	Constrained Decision
Closed	Routine Habit	Fatalism

As the above diagram illustrates, the model holds that a decision situation contains two dimensions which affect information seeking and giving. The model predicts that individuals will seek information when they perceive a problem (the individual is open). To have a problem simply means that an individual recognizes that he has a choice between alternatives. Secondly, the model predicts that individuals will seek information only about alternatives which are feasible within their situation or environment. The combinations of these two dimensions yields four types of decision situations and/or decision modes.

Problem solving is a type of decision situation in which the individual recognizes that alternatives are present and therefore that a problem exists. Alternatives are also

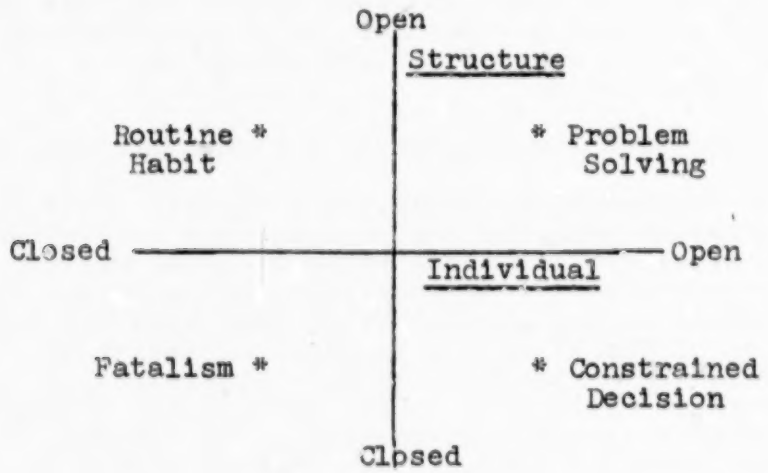
available within the structure. This individual in this situation is "rational." He weighs alternatives and chooses among them. Volition, or perceived volition, in making a choice exists. Because the individual evaluates alternatives, information in useful, and information seeking and giving are important aspects of problem solving. This is the only decision mode which is "modern" in nature.

Constrained decision is characterized by physical or structural blocks within the system which rule out all but one alternative or a limited range of alternatives. The individual has little perceived volition, even though he recognizes alternatives that are excluded by constraints in his situation. Because alternatives are constrained, information seeking will be low, although information concerning presently excluded alternatives will not be avoided.[4]

Routine habit is characterized by a closed-minded individual in an open structure. This individual considers only a habitual alternative. His cognitive process is rigid, and his information seeking is negligible and directed only toward messages which reinforce his habitual alternative. He readily gives information, however, when his alternative is threatened.

In fatalism, the individual neither recognizes a problem nor has alternatives available within his structure. He feels that he has no control over his environment and he has lost interest in controlling it. For these reasons, he is not an information seeker.

Some readers may object that these decision modes are too idealized and like most typologies, too inflexible (i. e., there may be middle points between them. This is a valid criticism and for this reason, some may prefer to interpret the decision modes as discrete points on two continuous scales (see below).



To apply this model in the Colombian studies, I used Q-factor analysis of survey data (correlation and factoring of people rather than variables) to develop six types of large landowners and six types of peasants. In the analysis, I included three types of variables: 1) pre-cognitive variables, to indicate the opportunity structure and individual differences, 2) cognitive variables, the decision modes and communication variables, and 3) post-cognitive variables--consequences of cognition such as income, adoption of technology, productivity, (all of which become pre-cognitive variables in a continuous process. The conclusions from the latifundista study were:[5]

> Information seeking was negatively related to routine and ignorant habit and had little function for the traditional types discovered in the study. But information seeking was strongly related to problem solving; information was important to and sought by already entrepreneurial types...exposure to the mass media was not related to entrepreneurial development. In contrast, the most traditional type was the most noted for its newspaper exposure. All of the latifundistas interviewed possessed the minimum educational and literacy requirements for media exposure. But the media normally carry little situationally relevant information and thus are of little functional use to them. Media use instead seemed to serve more of a diversionary or entertainment role.

The conclusions from the minifundista study were similar:[6]

> For the typologies with available opportunities, communication behavior was an important determinant of the typology; for those without opportunities it was nonexistent. Communication behavior and its concomitant social-psychological variables are a function of the situation in which an individual performs. Communication can have little effect in modernizing peasants unless situational changes first make modernization possible...structural rigidies exist in Colombia and similar underdeveloped countries because of elite control of political processes, the mass media, and other communication channels--a control accompanied by elite desire to preserve the status quo. In a country like Colombia, real peasant progress will never occur given the present social and political structure of society. Under the present structure, the potential role of communication in development seems extremely limited.

Several other studies can be cited to support this paradigm. For example, Fett measured the degree to which peasant farmers in Brazil sought various types of market information.[7] Peasants sought information about crops where several alternative markets existed. They did not seek information when the market structure was closed.

In a study in Afghanistan, Whiting found that structural factors--lack of supplies of new technology and lack of finances--were more important reasons for not adopting new technology than was attitudinal resistance.[8] He also found that "Since media exposure was very low and characterological modernity surprisingly high it seems clear that mass media are not necessary conditions for characterological modernity."[9]

Likewise, Sultana Krippendorff has used historical analysis to show that the mass media in India resisted religious change and supported the status quo when British missionaries entered the country.[10] Marceau, similarly, has shown that social conflicts in French communities prevented communication messages from bringing change:[11]

> Conflicts mean that instead of clear guidance for action, confusing messages are sent out concerning innovations of all kinds...There will be conflicts over the aims, means, and results of social, economic, and political change and the desirability of even technical innovations, conflicts which will be reflected in the messages mass media, "experts," and ordinary individuals receive and transmit.

In a study of road building projects in 31 Colombian communities, Felstehausen concluded that:[12]

> ...information and technology were available at the operational level, a conclusion attested to by the fact that local groups often undertook and completed road projects without outside technical assistance. The principal obstacle did not appear to be information. Rather, the rules, rewards, and sanctions of the system were organized in such a way that they did not foster the desired action.

Elsewhere, I have conceptualized that communication has two different functions for systems in general--it either

changes the system or controls it.[13] What the above studies show is that system control is by far the most common communication function in underdeveloped countries. We might go so far as to say that it is "natural" for communication to support the status quo, unnatural to change it.

This conclusion sharpens our theoretical perspective on the relationship of communication to development. But the conclusion is a sobering one for a communications researcher because it means that the only thing he can recommend to a professional communicator is to wait for change to occur so that he can then communicate information about new opportunities created by structural change. But in underdeveloped countries change is unlikely to occur because social and economic elites control the system and have little desire to change it except when change improves their own situation.

Lest pessimism overwhelm us at this point, let's turn now to some ideas for research on what communication can do to bring about development.

From Receivers to Messages and Sources

One of the first things I found in my Colombian research was that information produced by most communication organizations such as the mass media, extension services, etc. did not even articulate alternatives for individuals who were in an open structure--e.g., entrepreneurial large landowners. In other words, the messages produced had little situational relevance either for large landowners or for peasants. Even problem solvers and information seekers could not obtain relevant messages.

Fett obtained similar results in a content analysis of the agricultural pages of several Brazilian newspapers. "Of the 725 items coded," he reports, "only 64 had high situational relevance."[14]

In a Venezuelan study, Mathiason found that the mass media gave people attributes (facts) about objects in their situation, but did not tell them how to organize and utilize these facts. He concludes:[15]

> It seems to me that the mass media, rather than dealing with attributes (our classical conception of news), could deal in modes of discrimination. They could teach...how individuals do and/or can cope with situations. They could show, not the big picture nor the view from the instituion, but rather the picture from the viewpoint of the individual who is trying to cope...In a sense the parables in the New Testament are a demonstration of how people should organize reality. It seems certain that this technique placed in a mass communication medium had great effect for many centuries in altering peoples' way of structuring reality, leading to rapid social change.

Finally, Brown has found that if content is relevant, even printed messages can reach illiterates.[16] This occurs through "dependent literacy" in which a literate family member or friend reads to the illiterate.

The conclusion that can be reached from these studies is that the first thing we can tell professional communicators is to produce messages which are situationally relevant to the audiences they are attempting to reach. Then they should use devices such as parables, examples of success, illustrations, etc. to show how the information can be applied.

The tricky part of this advice is, of course, finding out what messages will be situationally relevant. In a paper presented to the Organizational Communications Division of ICA a year ago, I suggested that the answer lies in the communicator's ability to learn from his clientele:[17]

> We need to measure the extent to which the organization understands the clientele's view of what the situation is and what ought to be done about it. And in instances when the clientele does not itself understand its situation, we need to measure the extent to which the organization can think through the clientele's situation from the standpoint of the needs and values of the clientele and then bring in new information which would help clients to better evaluate consequences facing them...This means that both the organization and its clientele must learn from each other. But the organization must learn from its clientele before the clientele can effectively learn from the organization.

To be able to think through the recipient's situation requires a set of theoretical concepts which allow the professional communicator to empathize with his audience and to seek information from that audience. The decision situation model outlined above has worked well for that purpose. In the Colombian studies, for example, the model made it possible to outline the information needs of the types of peasants and large landowners.

The model tells a communicator that if he knows his clientele are problem solvers then he can expect them to seek information relevant to their problem orientation (their most important perceived problems). If they face a constrained decision, then they will seek little information unless the information tells them how to remove the constraints.[18]

If they are in a routine habit or fatalism situation, communication will do little, and a drastic change in their situation must come before the communicator can communicate with them. For example, in Colombia I recommended that taking away most of a traditional latifundista's land would provide this drastic change in his situation.[19]

In summary, these findings show that professional communicators should seek information from their audiences so that they can in turn give relevant information to these audiences.[20] This, then, is my first recommendation for new directions in research: to study means of improving the information seeking abilities of professional communicators in underdeveloped countries.

But this advice still doesn't take us far enough. I had reached this stage in my thinking four years ago when I left Colombia. What was frustrating to me was the realization that few if any Colombian agencies would pay any attention to my advice--assuming that the advice is good and that the agencies hear about it. Why would they ignore the advice? Simply because the professional communicators in these agencies would have to recommend behavior inconsistent with the value systems of the formal organizations and reference groups of which the communicators are a part.

It was at this point that I realized that the decision model I had been using to predict communication behavior of client or recipient individuals could also predict the communication behavior of the formal organization or mass medium sending the message.

Chaffee and McLeod's coorientation paradigm provided the framework for this new means of analysis.[21] In the coorientation paradigm, one stops looking at sources, messages, media, and receivers and starts looking at the communications dialogue between two individuals or systems. Applying this framework to my decision model led me to look at combinations of decision modes in coorientation situations. These combinations should predict when communication will take place and what its effects will be.

Of the 10 possible combinations of the four decision situations, only the combination of two problem solvers facing the same problem would seem to allow for communication interaction and success in achieving accuracy, understanding, or agreement--the dependent variables in Chaffee and McLeod's scheme.[22]

On the other hand, two individuals in a routine habit situation could communicate with and reinforce one another if they are attached to the same alternative. Two individuals facing a constrained decision could communicate about a common constraint or could share frustrations about being constrained. And it is feasible that a problem solver could communicate with any individual in one of the other three situations to the extent of achieving accuracy (being able to predict the cognitions of the other person). But this accuracy would be one-sided--i.e., the other persons would not seek information from the problem solver. In none of the other

combinations of decision situations could communication occur with any degree of success.

Thinking in terms of these combinations became especially intriguing when I asked myself, "In what decision situation are most Colombian mass media and organizations sponsoring development programs?" My answer: routine habit. Then, "In what situation are most poor individuals in Colombia?" My answer: constrained decision.

That combination--routine habit and constrained decision--is a situation in which successful communication would seldom occur. An individual in a routine habit situation seeks only information which reinforces the status quo and he gives information supporting the status quo. The individual in constrained decision communicates little at all except about means to eliminate the constraint. This combination of routine habit organizations and constrained individuals seemed to me to explain the Colombian situation perfectly.

* Another necessary direction, then, for communication research is to find means of jolting organizations out of a routine habit mode so that they in turn can seek information from poor individuals in order to isolate their constraints and organize these individuals to bring pressure on the political and economic system to eliminate these constraints.

I want to elaborate on this somewhat more, but first let me stop to make my second recommendation for new directions in research. * That recommendation is to study the formal

organizations which publish the mass media and sponsor change agents and other professional communicators. Are they indeed routine habit organizations? And do they staff themselves with individuals who match this routine habit orientation?

I would predict that the mass media and governmental agencies in underdeveloped countries are staffed by elite and middle class individuals or at times by coopted lower-class individuals. But this needs to be documented.[23] For the mass media it would be useful to replicate the classic gatekeeper studies conducted in the United States.

Journalism researchers have long been interested in studying freedom of the press in underdeveloped countries. I would suggest that the media in all countries are controlled by someone, and it would be more fruitful to study who controls the media in any country rather than to define "freedom" as the abscence of government control and then to do research to determine whether such freedom exists.[24]

For communicators in organizations other than the mass media, it would be useful to document the social and attitudinal backgrounds of these communicators. Such studies could be similar to the one done by Lipsky in the United States in which he found that "street-level bureaucrats" generally had a middle-class orientation and thus had difficulty communicating with their low-income clientele.[25]

Communication Procedures for Emergent Systems

In a recent paper, Carter defines one aspect of communication as the bridging of gaps necessary to bring about an emergent system.[26] An emergent system, in contrast with a given system, does not now exist but for various reasons it might be desirable to bring that system into existence.[27]

This notion of an emergent system made me realize that what I have been calling the change and control functions of communication in a system are really the effects of communication on individuals within a given system. For a system to continue to exist, it must control the individuals within it--i.e., reinforce its values and norms. Systems resist messages which might change their constituent individuals because changing these elements would by definition of a system change the system as a whole.

If, however, an individual who is constrained in a given system can communicate with individuals in other given systems who are facing similar constraints, then they should be able to interact in order to bring about an emergent system with new rules and institutions. This, as I pointed out above, is the essence of development.

Carter says communications researchers should search for procedures which are effective in bridging gaps in emergent systems. This is the basis, then, of my third and most important recommendation for research: Communications researchers should search for organizational and institutional structures

and staffing patterns which have been and/or could result in communication procedures effective in creating collectivities which in turn can pressure for change.

The effect of such communication still will not be an immediate change in system structure throughout the country. Rather its effect will be awareness by some individuals (accuracy in coorientational terms) that there are individuals sharing common problems in other systems who as a collectivity could apply influence to bring about structural change.

Some organizations in underdeveloped countries are problem solvers which have been successful in bringing constrained individuals together. I think, for example, of peasant unions in some Latin American countries and of the Catholic Church in Brazil and Chile. It may even be fruitful to study such organizations in Communist countries or civil rights organizations in the United States.

Also, if one could find a successful agrarian reform agency or community development agency, their structure and communication procedures would merit study.[28] Likewise, there should be mass media which have been successful in bringing about emergent systems in these countries. How have they structured themselves to be both successful information seekers and givers?

I stress formal organizations as units of analysis for this research rather than change agents or communicators as individuals because professional communicators are almost

always a part of a formal organization and because I believe that organizational structure restricts or enhances the effectiveness of individuals within the organization more than the attitudes of these individuals.[29] Organizational structure is an especially important predictor of information giving and seeking of individuals within that organization.

At this point, though, one must return to the question which frustrated me when I left Colombia. Suppose we do find effective organizational structures and communication procedures for bringing about emergent systems. How do we plant and nurture this promising organization within the larger and generally alien suprasystem of most underdeveloped countries? Some governments would want such an organization. Most would not. Some developed countries might support them with foreign aid, but my experience has been that most will not.

It's a question I can't answer. But to come back to the point I made at the beginning of the paper, I can say that at least we will have some useful advice to give when professional communicators, government officials, or foreign aid agencies ask us how to improve communications in underdeveloped countries.

FOOTNOTES

1. Warren F. Ilchman and Norman Thomas Uphoff, The Political Economy of Change (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), pp. 9-10.

2. Robert Brown, Explanation in Social Science (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1963).

3. There are many semantic controversies over what is a decision or what is a decision process. I prefer to talk about decision types as modes of making cognitive discriminations and decision situations as combinations of individual and situational characteristics which generally result in these decision modes.

4. When I conducted these studies I also conceptualized a decision situation which I called ignorant habit. Its only distinction from constrained decision was that the structural block came from a lack of intellectual or educational capacity of the individual. When I began to think in matrix terms, I equated this decision type with constrained decision.

5. James E. Grunig, "Information and Decision Making in Economic Development," Journalism Quarterly 46 (Autumn 1969): 565-575.

6. James E. Grunig, "Communication and the Economic Decision-making Processes of Colombian Peasants," Economic Development and Cultural Change 19 (July 1971): 580-597.

7. John H. Fett, "Infrastructural Factors and Information Search," Paper presented to the Association for Education in Journalism, Carbondale, Ill., August 1972.

8. Gordon C. Whiting, "Individual Innovativeness and Agricultural Development: The Afghan Case," Paper presented to the Rural Sociological Society, Denver, August 1971.

9. Gordon C. Whiting, "The Development Role of Mass Media in Afghanistan," Paper presented to the Association for Education in Journalism, Columbia, S. Car., August 1971.

10. Sultana Krippendorff, "A Sociological Approach to Mass Media Development in India," Paper presented to the Association for Education in Journalism, Carbondale, Ill., August 1972.

11. F. Jane Marceau, "Communication and Development: A Reconsideration," Public Opinion Quarterly 36 (Summer 1972): 235-245.

12. Herman Felstehausen, "Conceptual Limits of Development Communications Theory," Paper presented to the Association for Education in Journalism, Columbia, S. Car., August 1971.

13. James E. Grunig, "Organizational Communication and Social Action," Paper presented to the International Communication Association, Atlanta, April 1972.

14. John H. Fett, "Content and Situational Relevance of Agricultural News in Brazilian Papers," Journalism Quarterly 49 (Autumn 1972): 505-511.

15. John R. Mathiason, "Communication Patterns and Powerlessness among Urban Poor: Toward the Use of Mass Communications for Rapid Social Change," Paper presented to the Association for Education in Journalism, Washington, D. C. August 1970.

16. Marion R. Brown, "Communication and Agricultural Development: A Field Experiment," Journalism Quarterly 47 (Winter 1970): 725-734.

17. Grunig, "Organizational Communication and Social Action," Op. cit.

18. Felstehausen says much the same thing: "Seen thus, relevant information for development is that which contributes new institutional roles and relationships." Op. cit.

19. I have also applied the model in a study of internal communication in a U. S. corporation. James E. Grunig, "Information Seeking in Organizational Communication: A Case Study of Applied Theory," Paper presented to the International Communication Association, Montreal, April 1973.

20. See also Hans C. Groot, "A Diachronic Communications Construct for Information Systems in Development," Paper presented to the International Communications Association, Phoenix, April 1971.

21. For an up-to-date review of coorientational research, see the March/April 1973 issues of American Behavioral Scientist to be published in late April.

22. I did find this relationship in a study of community decision making in a suburban county of Washington, D. C. James E. Grunig, "Communication in Community Decisions on the Problems of the Poor," Journal of Communication 22 (March 1972): 5-25.

23. Two years ago I began to do a content analysis on the relative amount of social change and social control messages in two major Colombian daily newspapers (both "liberal"). I had drawn a sample of 30 newspapers chosen randomly over a six-month period. I found the content analysis of the entire issue of 60 newspapers more burdensome than I had imagined. But after analyzing two issues of each paper, the relative proportions were: 14% social change, 67% social control, 19% neutral.

24. Along the same lines, Ilchman and Uphoff say: "Pool's argument (that communications development is apolitical) neglects the fact that an "apolitical" communications policy that permits, for instance, laissez-faire use of radio, television, and newspapers is in fact political in that it apportions use of communications media to those sectors that have the economic resources to pay for such use, or status to command it. Regime choices of one communications policy or another have political consequences for the community. Op. cit., p. 250.

25. Michael Lipsky, "Toward a Theory of Street-Level Bureaucracy," Paper presented to the American Political Science Association, New York, September 1969.

26. Richard F. Carter, "A General System Characteristic of Systems in General," Paper presented to the Far West Region Meeting, Society for General Systems Research, Portland, Ore., September 1972.

27. Engineers also consider one of their most challenging problems to be that of defining a desired system and then building the necessary structure to achieve that system--e. g., designing a building to withstand tornadoes.

28. I have found that interracial staffing at all levels of a community development agency in suburban Maryalnd seemed to achieve this result. For a brief review of the study see James E. Grunig and Keith R. Stamm, "Communication and Coorientation of Collectivities," American Behavioral Scientist, March/April 1973.

29. For the structural approach to organizations see Charles Perrow, Organizational Analysis: A Sociological View Belmont, Calif., Brooks/Cole Publishing Co., 1970.